

By Divine Appointment

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[0 : 00] We read, or certainly part of the passage we read in Jeremiah chapter 1, page 6 to 7. Let's read again from verse 4.

Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

Then I said, O Lord, behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a you. The Lord said to me, do not say, I am only a you. For to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord. Last Sunday evening, in our After Church Fellowship, when Megan was speaking about a recent trip to Eastern Asia, we should refer to this very passage in Jeremiah, this passage in which we find Jeremiah called to God, to proclaim, to go and proclaim God's word to all the nations.

And Jeremiah responding, as we read there in verse 6, O Lord, behold, I do not know how to speak, I am only a you. A response of, we might say, genuine humility.

[1 : 26] Apprehension for the task that he felt was beyond him. I'm sure Megan felt that when she, or even before she embarked on her long journey to the land, to that land, and through that land, where she was being sent to by God.

As many of God's people, many of God's servants have responded to in exactly the same way when you've been called to do something by God, to do God's bidding.

And I know that, you know, this passage is particularly concerned with a prophet of God, in fact, one of the great prophets of God. This was a particular calling that Jeremiah had, but the principles are the same.

It's not just to preachers of the word, it's to all of the Lord's people who have a calling to go and to do what the Lord has commanded them to do, to be his witnesses, to be his ambassadors, to go into all the nations, to take your stand for the word of truth, and to do it by divine appointment.

It's an appointment that God gives you for his sake, and for the sake of the gospel. I trust that for every single person gathered here in this building, this morning, that you'll find this word relevant to you, to you who are being called to do the Lord's will wherever he sends you, and even for you who at this moment can't discern God's will for you, maybe even for you who are not yet a Christian, because as we look through this passage, and we see what we call the sovereign purposes of God, spelled out here.

[3 : 09] We're seeing, revealed for us, a God whose will is done on earth, as it's done in heaven. And we're seeing here a God who makes no mistakes in his calling, and in his choosing.

So there are three things you'll see in your notes, there are three things that I want to look with you this morning at. Verses 4 to 5, the call. The call, as we've just been reading. Then Jeremiah's response in verse 6.

And then verses 7 to 10, the reassurance, God's reassurance of Jeremiah, his reassurance of all who are his. The call, there again in verse 4 and 5, as we said when we were reading, no doubt this is Jeremiah many, many years later, recalling that time when he was called to be a prophet.

You know, this was God's doing, God's leading, God's choosing. This wasn't some kind of career choice that Jeremiah thought would be a good thing to do.

This wasn't some kind of thing that he thought, well, this is something that I really should do by his own reasoning. No, this was God's calling him. So when we look at this passage, the focus isn't primarily on Jeremiah.

[4 : 20] The focus is on God, the Lord. So God's word comes to him. This, no doubt, this internal call of God to the heart of this young man. And he could do no other.

And you'll see this call that's emphasized, verse 5, in three connected ways to show us that this is God's initiative in that calling. Look at the three things, verse 5.

The three actions of God that that he knew Jeremiah, that he consecrated Jeremiah, that he appointed Jeremiah. And you look at the first two there, the knowing and the consecration.

This is happening before Jeremiah is even born. Before I formed you, I knew you. Before you were born, I consecrated you. So whatever else we see in these words, just remember this, that God's the author of life and that God has a plan for each one of you.

Psalms 139 tells us that. Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me. And as yet, there were none of them.

[5 : 33] So we're not haphazard collections of random cells come together, not at all. It's not that we're born with no purpose. God is the author of life and God is the taker away of life.

He's ordained your days, all your days, from all eternity. And that, I pray, is a blessing to you, an encouragement to you, especially if you're going through particularly dark and difficult times at the moment.

If even you're from day to day, you're struggling even to understand God's will and purpose for you. Remember, as we see here, God has determined your days. God has a purpose for you, even in the depths.

You are his. And his purposes reach back. Eve, it purpose is for you reach back even into eternity, even before you are physically formed.

So with Jeremiah, so with you. God knew you. God knows you. So, knowing, it's more than just facts about you.

[6 : 40] This word here that we see here before I formed you, the mind knew you. This is a word that speaks of intimacy. This is a word that speaks of personal commitment. So, what we're seeing here is that God's saying he knew Jeremiah in that intimate knowledge of all that Jeremiah, all that would happen in Jeremiah's life.

And he's got intimate knowledge of every aspect of your life. He's with you always. He's with you at all times and all occasions. And there's not one aspect of your life that's beyond God's commitment to you for your good and for his glory.

And the Christian can surely find comfort. And these words, and comfort even in the second of God's actions there, before you were born, I consecrated you.

I set you apart. Set you apart for the work that you're to do. Look at the separation of Jeremiah here. It's a work of divine service.

The words given to Jeremiah that really began his prophetic ministry. Jeremiah would face dark and difficult days ahead.

[7 : 51] He's going to be hounded. He's going to be persecuted. He's going to be thrown into a bottle dungeon. He's going to be left there for dead. He's going to be rejected by his own people. But God's assuring him even before that ministry begins that the work that God has given him to do is God's work.

And that Jeremiah has been set aside by divine appointment for the master's service. And that's a comfort to each one of you who are in the master's service.

God's not promising you an easy journey. I mean, we've been looking at that in our morning services. Remember, we've been considering the endurance and the discipline that's required in every Christian's life.

But God has promised intimate knowledge of you in your every circumstance. He's set you apart for the work that He's entrusted you to do, whatever that work is.

And it's His perfect will for you in that work. Don't despair. He knows you. He's known every aspect of your life even before you were born. He knows every aspect of your life between the time of your birth and the time and the day that He calls you home to Himself.

[9 : 02] So, two actions already we've seen that speak of God's knowledge, God's consecration even before Jeremiah was born, even for you who are known of God and set apart by God.

The plans of God for you rooted, rooted in eternity. There was a third action here. I appointed you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

It's this sort of sense of hereby I appoint you. I appoint you as a prophet. The authority of God speaking here. God's made the appointment. You know, in business, whenever you see something that's designated by royal appointment, it refers us, you know, I'm sure you know, it's good services

that are given to individuals in the royal family.

In Britain's case, it's actually three individuals in the British royal family who are able to have this designation, as it were, for them. The Queen, it's Prince Philip and it's Prince Charles.

And you can go through a list, you can see them online, all the things that are given to them by royal appointment. You've got Bendix chocolates for the Queen, Burberry for the Prince of Wales, Barber for the Barber, jackets for the Duke of Edinburgh.

[10:18] But the point is, they've all got this stamp of royal approval and all the honour, the privilege that comes with that appointment. How much infinitely more the honour of being sent by divine appointment, how much more the privilege of being identified with the one who makes that appointment.

Because it's no ordinary appointment. It's no ordinary choosing. Because you have been appointed by the King of Kings. The Apostle Paul, if we had time, we'd have read much of Romans 8.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 8 is actually echoing these words that God gave to Jeremiah. Paul wrote of the blessings of those who know God's calling. You go to Romans 8, 29 to 30, and he wrote of believers there being foreknown and predestined and called.

That glorious privilege of the one who's foreknown from all eternity. He's predestined from all eternity. He's called from all eternity even before you were born.

You were born into space and time. So you have a privilege that's of royal appointment. You've got that divine appointment. That divine appointment that sets you apart to do God's will, to do what he's called you to do in his service.

[11:39] For the glory of his name. So they call. But then look at the response in verse 6. Our Lord, behold, I don't know how to speak. I'm only a youth.

This is many years later that Jeremiah's written all this down. But why is he doing this? Surely he's doing this to bring out the grace of God in that appointment.

That grace that overruled Jeremiah's argument. And, you know, you'll read many, many popular explanations about Jeremiah's response. But we're going to look at the passage.

And we're going to look at the reasons for this response and bring this to ourselves. Apply this to ourselves. When you are called to do something for God and to assess your reaction in light of God's calling you.

Well, what do we see here? Well, Jeremiah's not saying something we often assume he's saying. He's recognizing that God has absolute authority over his life.

[12:43] We look at the very fact he's calling on our Lord God, sovereign Lord. He's saying, Lord, you are sovereign over all things. You are the covenant God of Israel.

I mean, he fully accepts that God has the right and the authority to direct him where God will send him. So that's not a problem to Jeremiah. He's not making excuses as so often we think.

He's replying with what he thinks or what he claims as a valid reason for not going forth as a prophet at that particular time in his life because he says, I'm only a youth. Now, we don't know exactly what his age was.

Some range from 12, age 12 to age 20. The word couldn't actually cover quite a number of years. But whatever his exact age was, he's a young man.

Now, in the culture of the day, a young person didn't just stand up and address public meetings. So he sees that obviously as a real problem to do with his age.

[13:47] And he's also aware prophets before him, they suffered because they had a message to give, a message that was unpopular to their hearers, to rulers, to people.

So here's this young man who's given a word from God, who's appointed him as a prophet, and Jeremiah is using reason. He's using reasons to suggest this is not the right time for me to be a prophet.

I'm an experience in the world. I'm just going to be counter-cultural to what's out there. How often do we come before God with exactly the same kind of reasons when God calls you to do a particular work for him?

And you say, Lord, it's not the right time. Lord, I'm just inexperienced in what you're asking me to do. Lord, they're not going to listen to me. Lord, I'm just so young.

Lord, look at what they've done to people before me. How can I overcome these barriers? Have you ever heard yourself say these things, even in your heart before God?

[14:51] I know I have. I have. I remember very clearly the call that I was given, very direct call to going for the ministry in 2001. And I remember very clearly, Lord, but give me a few more years.

How are we going to cope? We're going to have next to no money. Lord, I hardly know how to preach. So human reasoning based on sight, certainly not based on faith, and not on the God who did the sending.

See, things that you and I see as relevant for not doing God's will, they're irrelevant to God because God's will is perfect for you on every single occasion when His will has been given for you to do for His glory.

And it's this reassurance, this reassurance of God's response that each and every one of us should look carefully at and apply in our own particular situations when God makes a particular call in your life and is appointing you for a service.

Look at the reassurance there from verse 7 down to verse 10. Look at God's response. Look at His initial response. He says, Do not say, do not say, I'm only a youth.

[16:13] I mean, God's already informed Jeremiah that He's known Him, that He's set them apart before His birth. God's, it's been God who's appointed Him as prophet. So, since God has that eternal foreknowledge and decision, then who's Jeremiah to dispute that perfect timing of God?

Who are you and I? Who am I? Who are we to dispute God's particular timing and God's particular sending and the work that He gives you to do? Because He's called you from all eternity and He'll provide you.

He'll provide you with all the necessary resources to fulfill His command. So, if you're to speak for Him, He'll give you the words to speak. And I may be perhaps speaking personally and saying that certainly before this, my calling, my public speaking was pretty rubbish.

Maybe it still is. Who knows? But, you know, if you're serving Him in any way, He will provide the means necessary for His will to be done through you. So, God says to Jeremiah, don't say, I'm only a child.

He's saying to you, don't say, I'm only this or only that. You are a called servant of the Lord to go and to do what He commands you to do.

[17:38] You know, think of the call that the Lord Jesus was given. That eternal call of Jesus to go into the world to do what? To save His people. That call from all eternity.

It was a divine appointment of God the Father. And Jesus didn't say, how can I ask you, how can I do what you've asked me to do? How can I be what I've never been before?

How can I die a death for others when I'm the author of life? No, Jesus obeyed willingly. It's for you and I to be willingly in whatever God asks you to do for Him.

Because God promises He will provide all, all that you need. And it's that all, in fact, you see there, that whatever from verse 7, for all to whom I send you shall go and whatever I command you, you shall speak the all and whatever, the everyone and everything that God directs you to.

You see, it wasn't for Jeremiah to somehow pick and choose what he's going to say and pick and choose to whom he was going to go to to give God's message.

[18:50] Jeremiah has been sent to all and to say whatever, whatever message God had given him to do. that would bring, as we said, so much hardship for Jeremiah.

As we said, he was going to be despised and rejected. He struggled many times with giving that message. He didn't struggle at times in his complaints to God.

But God had directed him and that was enough. And it may well be and it will be, it will be, the message that God gives to you in whatever sphere of service that he sends you, you'll face opposition.

And the witness that you bring to your Lord and Saviour, it will be despised by so many. You'll be sowing seed. Some will accept that word.

Others will reject the message. But it's for you and I to be faithful, faithful to your particular calling that God sends you on. Well, Jeremiah, he's obviously expressed some sense of personal weakness, some sense of personal inadequacy for the work as we've seen there in his response to God's call.

[20:09] And as we can work out too from God's reassurance in verse 8, we can sense of course that Jeremiah is afraid. He's got the self-perceived inability to engage with those whom he's going to be sent to.

So God gives him a second negative. So, first negative, don't say I'm only a child. Then the second negative, don't be afraid of them.

Don't be afraid of them, those whom you're going to be sent to. Those who are going to be older than you. Those whom you reckon are going to shun my word and oppose my message.

And how often isn't it that we're afraid, I'm afraid, you're afraid of them. Those whom we perceive are going to be our opponents, those whom we think are going to make my life so difficult and somehow get through to my fragile self.

But God gives you this wonderful promise, this word of promise, this same word that he gave to Jeremiah. He says, don't be afraid for I am with you. I am with you.

[21 : 20] This is the same Lord of Jeremiah. This is the same Lord of each one of you. That promise, I am with you, still resonates for everyone that's been given the word, the good news to proclaim, the good news to make disciples of all nations.

That word that Jesus gave to his disciples when he sent them out, the same word, I am with you always. It's the same word he gives to you when he sends you out to do his bidding. It's a truth that none of us should ever forget.

You know, in our midweek meetings we've been looking at the believers' union with Christ. You know, that, the believers' identity with Christ, the believers' identity in Christ, and that union that every single Christian has of Christ abiding in him, Christ abiding in her, and he in you.

He's with you, inseparably with you in every aspect of your service for him. So don't be afraid of them, whoever they are.

Why? Because he's the Lord of glory. The Lord of glory and might and power is with you. He promises to be with you. He promised Jeremiah that he'd be with them, and to do what?

[22 : 41] To deliver him. Not promising to remove you from situations in which you're going to find opposition and rejection and mockery and hurt and sorrow, but a rescue from the very full force of these difficulties.

Because you see, God loves you. He loves you so much that he's sending you out with his word. And he's entrusting you with that glorious message. Whether you're bringing that message to our children, to adults, whether it's a message to your friends, your colleagues, your neighbours, your relatives, teachers on the other side of the world, villagers in a remote part of another continent, whether it's a message to homeless people, to addicts, to prisoners, to military, to ex-military, whomsoever God sends you to, he goes with you, as God promised you'd be with Jeremiah.

And that's confirmed here to Jeremiah. It's confirmed to all who are sent. You see that in verse 9, Then the Lord put out his hand, touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

So here's this vision that Jeremiah has had. It's obviously not literal. It's a vision. Jeremiah has been assured that God is with them. God's going to deliver them from his enemies, those who reject his message.

And there's this further reassurance in this vision that if you work it out you can see that the words that Jeremiah are going to speak, these are words that have come from God.

[24 : 23] They're not Jeremiah's words first and foremost, they're God's words. Yes, they're God's words that Jeremiah is going to proclaim, but he'll do it with that delegated authority that God gives them.

See verse 10, he have set you this day over nations, over kingdoms, to pluck up and break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. In other words, Jeremiah is going to give a message that involves both condemnation and a building up of the people.

It's going to be a message of judgment and praise. Whenever we proclaim God's word, there has to be that balance. There has to be as it were the whole counsel of God given.

Because if it's just a message of condemnation, if it's just condemnation only, that's an imbalance that repels rather than attract someone to the gospel.

But if it's just a message of praise, that's all that it is, then it does nothing to identify sin, whether it's sin in a nation or sin in an individual.

[25 : 26] So, reassurance. Jeremiah has received this reassurance to quell his anxiety. Have you been privileged to go forth with the word of God?

Are you reassured? Are you reassured by this message this morning that's been given? I had no intention of preaching this passage this time last week, I assure you. So, obviously there's very

much a purpose in this passage being delivered today.

Maybe you're scared, maybe you're in some trepidation. trepidation. So, if you know the famous example of John Knox, he was asked to preach in St. Andrews a long time ago, shall we say, certainly before the Reformation.

And when he was appointed to preach, he burst into tears. And he just went to his room, he stayed there for a number of days. And we're told that he showed much grief and trouble of heart that the prospect of his preaching.

But in the strength of God the Lord, he obeyed. He obeyed his calling. He became one of, if not the greatest of Scotland's preachers. Whether it's petrified ministers, reticent missionaries, reluctant ambassadors for the Lord, God gives you the increase.

[26 : 44] God gives the increase. As one writer said, he said, like John Knox, he said, those who are the most timorous at first when they're called or the bravest at the last.

What if you who've heard the call of God to go to deliver his word, will you go? Or are you afraid? Will you trust in the one whose promise never fails? He's given you that word, he's given you that word, he's assured you of his presence, of his power. you're not on your own.

The famous expression is so true, one plus God is a majority. But what if you've not yet given your life to Christ? What if you've not yet received that word with joy and gladness that others have proclaimed to you over the years?

Well, remember it's not just the word of an individual, it's not the word of man, it's not mere words of mere men. the word that you hear each Lord's day is the word of Almighty God.

[27 : 56] It's the word that calls you to repent, repent of your sins, to turn to the Lord Jesus and trust in him for your salvation. That's the message Jeremiah has given, the message that each and every one who goes forth with the word of truth has given.

The word that's transformed the hearts and lives of millions upon millions of people. The word that you receive with joy will transform your life. It's a life-saving message.

Don't reject the word that's given to your heart. Many rejected the word that Jeremiah gave. Don't you reject that word, but turn, turn and obey that word that calls you to come to the Lord Jesus, to cast your sins at the cross of Calvary and to know that blessing of new life in the Lord Jesus.

New life now and new life eternally. Amen. Let us pray. We thank you Lord for your word, your word of truth, your word that never disappoints.

We thank you Lord for the royal appointment that you give to each and every one who goes forth with the word, sowing that seed. And we pray Lord that there will be the many even this day who receive that word with joy and go forth in rejoicing, celebration.

[29 : 21] May there indeed be rejoicing in heaven, even over one sinner who repents, even in our midst this morning. So continue to bless, we pray, and pardon all our sins we ask again in Jesus' name.

Amen.